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American Lutheran Church

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*The Lutheran Church
and the Negro
in America*



FACTS
FORCES
FIGURES



A NEW RACE

"A new race is growing up in America. Its skin is brown. This new race numbers twelve million in the United States, and other millions in the West Indies and Central America. In its culture it is almost entirely cut off from its ancient African home." *Brown America* by E. E. Embree.

AN UNWILLING IMMIGRANT

All the races of the earth have sought this America of ours of their own free will except the Negro. The first Negroes came in 1619 and their arrival is chronicled in the old records of Jamestown, Va.: "About the last of August came in a Dutch man-o-Warre and sold us twenty negars" and two hundred and forty-three years later in 1862 a slaver landed the last human cargo of slaves from Africa at Mobile, Alabama. In 1860 the total number of slaves in the United States was 3,955,000.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SINCE EMANCIPATION

When slavery was ended the Negro was a race with practically no property or education and with little religion. Recent census reports list some 70,000 Negroes engaged in various types of business and 100,000 in the professions, of these over 56,000 are teachers, and 20,000 preachers. For over a century the race has furnished its own preachers. There are approximately 4000 practicing physicians, 1500 dentists, 1000 lawyers, 5000 nurses with partial training. Nursing is a service for which the Negro women have always seemed particularly fitted. A special field in which the race has had a rather astonishing record is that of invention. Over 1500 patent rights have been issued to Negroes. George Washington Carver, has more than 165 uses and by-products of the lowly peanut to his credit.

THE CHURCH AND THE NEGRO

In spite of the fact that religion makes a strong emotional appeal to the Negro and that there is deep feeling expressed in his spirituals, the popular idea that practically all Negroes are church members is erroneous.

At the close of the Civil War there were few independent churches for the race. Negroes now have 47,000 churches with 6,000,000 members, and 46,000 Sunday schools enrolling 3,000,000 pupils. More than 39,000 of these churches are connected with denominations for Negroes alone. In addition there are 8,173 Negro congregations connected with various Protestant churches. During recent years the Roman Catholic church has begun an aggressive mission program in Negro communities. Figures vary greatly but there have been claims of 70,000, 135,000 and 300,000 Negroes holding membership in the Catholic church as compared to six million members in the Protestant churches.

The Negro church in the past has provided a substitute for political and social clubs as well as for religious expression. It is still feeling the effect of an untrained ministry. About twenty per cent of its ministers hold academic or theological degrees. Even this percentage is shrinking. Because of the opportunities in other fields, the lessening influence of the "preacher" and the old-fashioned methods prevalent, the educated younger generation is avoiding the ministry and to no little extent the church itself.

The religious development of the new race has been almost wholly directed by two denominations. The Baptists are said to have nearly sixty per cent of all Negro communicants and the Methodists nearly forty. The small remaining groups are scattered among other denominations and sects.

LUTHERAN WORK

The American Lutheran Church, the United Lutheran Church in America, and the Synodical Conference (Missouri and Wisconsin Synods, etc.) have church work in Negro communities,

with a total baptized membership of about 20,000 in the United States and the island possessions.

Of these members over 12,000 are affiliated with the Missouri Synod, more than 2,000 with the American Lutheran Church and approximately 2,000 with the United Lutheran Church congregations.

THE WORK OF THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE

The Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod in co-operation with the Synodical Conference has had missions for more than fifty years and has at the present time over 75 congregations in various parts of the United States with Christian Day Schools in some of these fields.

For the development of this work a junior college together with a seminary has been founded in Greensboro, North Carolina and an academy in Selma, Alabama.


THE UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH AND THE NEGRO

In addition to supporting the work of the American Lutheran Church, the United Lutheran Church in America aids several congregations affiliated with its own national church body. The history and development of these is interesting.

Before the formation of the United Lutheran Church in America there was only one small but self-supporting Negro congregation, Our Redeemer, Washington, D. C., in the synods which composed the United Lutheran Church. When the Virgin Islands were acquired by the United States an entirely new element entered into the situation.

For twenty-five years before the formation of the United Lutheran Church in America an average of one hundred Lutheran Negroes from the Danish West Indies annually immigrated to New York City. In all that time less than one hundred of these 2,700 souls sought out the established Lutheran churches.

On Washington's birthday, 1920, services were started in the Y.W.C.A. in Harlem, New York



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City. This work has continued to grow and the Church of the Transfiguration, New York City, is now a self-supporting congregation, with an enrollment of 1100.

Another congregation, Holy Trinity Church, has been organized in Jamaica, Long Island. This also promises to be a successful factor in the evangelization of their race.

The pastors of these two congregations have interesting backgrounds. Rev. Paul Edward West, a native of St. Croix, but raised in San Domingo, received his training at Wagner College and Mt. Airy Seminary. He was ordained by the New York Synod. Rev. J. W. Route, graduate of Augustana College and Seminary, was ordained by the New York Synod and engaged by the Board of American Missions for work among the Negroes in New York.

A mission of the United Lutheran Church in America among Negroes has been conducted in Chicago for some years. Two others have been started in Philadelphia.

After the Virgin Islands were transferred to the United States in March, 1917, the Lutheran congregations formerly supported by the Danish National Church appealed to their brethren in America for aid. There are five established congregations in the Islands. The church building on the Island of St. Croix was erected in 1749 and the English language has been used here longer than in any other Lutheran Church in the world.

THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH AND THE NEGRO

The work under the American Lutheran Church was begun in Baltimore, Maryland, about fifty years ago. At the present time this work is under the direction of an inter-synodical commission with representation and financial support coming from the American Lutheran Church, the United Lutheran Church in America, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Augustana Lutheran Church. Plans are to continue this cooperative work through the National Lutheran Council after January 1, 1951.

Congregations have been established in Baltimore, Maryland; Anniston, Birmingham, Clanton, Tuscaloosa, Booth, Wetumpka, Montgomery, and Mobile, Alabama; Jackson, Mississippi; Columbus and Dayton, Ohio; Los Angeles, California; and Portland, Oregon. The congregation in Washington, D. C., is operated cooperatively with the United Lutheran Church in America. For a number of years Christian Day Schools and one high school have been conducted in the principal stations in Alabama and Mississippi, but in recent years more and more of the emphasis is being placed on the work through the church, Sunday school, and daily vacation Bible schools.

Those having the Christian and Academic qualifications may receive training for the gospel ministry and other church work at Capital University and Seminary and Wartburg College and Seminary. To accommodate the young people in the distant congregations of Alabama and Mississippi, the American Lutheran Church established The Alabama Lutheran Bible Institute, cooperating with Alabama State College, Montgomery, Alabama.

Fourteen pastors and 23 Christian Day School teachers and parish workers are giving their full time to this mission program of the American Lutheran Church.

WOMEN'S MISSIONARY FEDERATION AND JUNIOR MISSION BAND AID

The Women's Missionary Federation and the Junior Mission Bands have supported this work of the American Lutheran Church by outright grants and by making available the following: The Chapel Fund, Student Aid Fund, The Revolving Book Loan Fund and The Fund for the Distribution of Christian Literature.

COMMISSION ON NEGRO MISSIONS

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